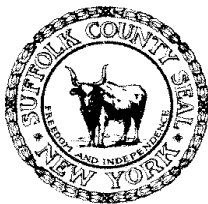


## COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



### STEVEN BELLONE SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

OFFICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES  
FRANK KROTSCHINSKY  
DIRECTOR

### LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE POLICY FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP) INDIVIDUALS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH HEARING OR VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

The Suffolk County Office for People with Disabilities (OPD) recognizes that the population of individuals eligible for its services includes individuals who are "limited English proficient" (LEP), i.e., unable to speak, read, write or understand the English language at a level that permits them to interact effectively with social service providers and other agencies, as well as individuals who are hearing or visually impaired. It is the goal of OPD to ensure meaningful access to services to LEP and/or hearing and/or visually impaired individuals. Accordingly, pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and County Executive Order No. 10-2012, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of national origin or disability by recipients of federal financial assistance, OPD adopts the following policy to ensure that LEP and hearing and/or visually impaired individuals can communicate effectively with staff and receive adequate information and legal assistance.

#### **I. Definitions:**

Limited English Proficiency (LEP), Describes a person who is unable to speak, read, write or understand the English language at a level that permits them to interact effectively with social service providers and other agencies, as well as individuals who are hearing or visually impaired.

Translation Converting written documents from one language into another.

Interpretation Language interpretation is the facilitating of oral or sign-language communication, either simultaneously or consecutively, between users of different languages. The act of listening to one language and orally converting it into another language while retaining the same meaning and nuance. Proper interpretation uses an interpreter who has a thorough understanding of the languages, and, preferably, the cultural backgrounds of the users of the languages.

Vital Documents Those documents most commonly distributed to the public that contain or elicit important and necessary information regarding the provision of basic County services.

## **II. Assessment**

At least once annually, OPD will conduct an assessment of the language needs of its eligible client population, utilizing census data, data from client files, data from community agencies and organizations, and other relevant sources. Based on this assessment, OPD will develop an annual plan regarding points of contact where language assistance is likely to be needed, the scope of assistance to be provided, the resources needed to provide assistance, and arrangements that must be made to access these resources in a timely fashion.

## **III. Policy on Language Assistance**

### **A. Oral Language Interpretation**

1. OPD is committed to providing trained and competent interpreters at each stage of representation where oral communication is needed, at no charge to the client. OPD will provide interpreters by hiring bilingual staff where possible, by contracting with outside interpreter services or voluntary community interpreters where available, and by use of telephone language interpreting services when other competent services in the client's native language are not timely available.
2. OPD will ensure that persons providing interpreting services for its clients understand their obligation to maintain client confidentiality.
3. OPD staff will not, under any circumstances, require clients to provide their own interpreters or rely on friends or family members for interpreting services. If a client wishes to use the services of his or her own chosen interpreter rather than one provided by OPD, the client's choice will be noted in his or her client file or database entry, after the client has been advised of his or her right to receive interpreting services free of charge. Depending on the circumstances, OPD staff may request that the client allow an interpreter provided by OPD to be present during oral communications, in the event that the assistance of the interpreter is needed. OPD will develop a list of questions to try to determine whether the client-suggested interpreter truly comprehends the language.
4. Telephone communications with hearing impaired individuals shall be made timely available through the use of TTY devices and/or the New York State relay service.
5. OPD maintains a contact database for keeping track of clients. The database will contain a check-off for noting LEP. If this box is checked, an entry will be made indicating which language is spoken by the client.
6. OPD is able to provide Sign Language Interpretation via Video Conferencing services.

### **B. Translation of Written Materials**

1. OPD will post and maintain signs in regularly encountered languages other than English, as well as in Braille and large print in its waiting rooms,

reception areas and other initial points of entry. The posted signs will be conspicuous and inform individuals seeking services of their right to free language assistance services, as well as inviting such individuals to identify themselves as persons needing language assistance services. Signs will also inform individuals of the complaint procedures for individuals who feel they have not received adequate language services.

2. OPD will make use of language identification cards which allow individuals seeking services to identify their language needs to staff.
3. OPD staff will record each client's language assistance needs in his or her client file or database entry..
4. OPD will provide written translation of vital documents into the non-English language of each regularly encountered LEP group likely to be eligible for its services. Translation of vital documents will also be provided in large print, braille and/or tape recorded form for individuals with visual impairments. Translations will be available in the six most commonly encountered languages: Spanish, Italian, Chinese (Mandarin, simple), Portuguese, French Creole, and Polish.

4(A) The list of vital documents includes:

Authorization for Release of Information  
Cover letter for SCAT card  
Cover Letter for Handicapped ID card  
Denial letter for SCAT Services  
Summary of SCAT Policies, Procedures and Guidelines  
Two page brochure describing functions and services of OPD  
Suffolk County Accessible Transit (SCAT) Application  
Suffolk County Handicapped Identification Card Application

5. For those language groups constituting a significant percentage of the eligible client population, OPD will provide written translation of its outreach materials. For all other groups, OPD will provide written notice, in the form of a card attached to the materials in all languages regularly encountered by the program, of the right to have the materials orally translated free of charge.

#### **IV. Training of Staff**

OPD will provide periodic training on the above policy to all staff, and maintain a training registry recording the names and dates of each employee's training. Trainings will be conducted in the form of a staff meeting at least once per year. Each staff member will receive a copy of this policy, and acknowledge receipt in writing. New staff, whether full or part time, shall be trained within thirty days of commencing employment. Training is mandatory

#### **V. Monitoring**

Based on the results of annual assessment, this policy may be revised to more effectively meet the language needs of the eligible client population. Factors that may warrant a revision of this policy include changes in local populations or frequency of encounters, availability of resources, continued availability of prior sources of assistance and development of new sources of assistance, effectiveness of the policy in meeting language assistance needs, and effectiveness of staff in implementing the policy.

#### **VI. Language Access Coordinator**

The Language access coordinator (LAC) will be the Director of OPD, currently Frank Krotschinsky. The LAC will monitor the contacts database and handle complaints and violations of the LEP policy. The LAC conducts periodic outreach to the community by speaking at public events. Written materials at such events will provide a brief summary of LEP rights and availability of interpreters in the most common languages to be encountered. Contacts are made by OPD staff with members of community associations (such as schools systems, community organizations, religious organizations, etc.) or project focus groups early in the project initiation. These will assist in determining whether there are any existing language barriers of which OPD should be aware. These associations are likely to be actively working LEP populations and may be the best source to learn about current LEP needs.

#### **VII. Currently Available Documents**

OPD Currently has the following Documents available in Spanish, Italian, Chinese (Mandarin, simple), Portuguese, French Creole, and Polish.

SCAT application (SC Accessible Transportation)  
Procedures and Guidelines for SCAT  
HDID (Disabilities ID)  
Brochure Describing OPD Functions

#### **VIII. Documents to be Translated**

Authorization for Release of Information  
Cover letter for SCAT card  
Cover Letter for Handicapped ID card  
Denial letter for SCAT Services

**Revised December 31, 2018    Limited English Proficiency Policy**

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